

"MIRACLES"

By Nina Wilcox Putnam.

THE clergyman shifted in his chair before the fire in his friend's room, and broke the static silence.

"Then you refuse to believe," said he, "simply because the age of miracles is past? Well, I am sorry that you let this stand as a stumbling-block, more sorry than I can say. For although I can show you no miracles I, somehow, believe."

"No!" said the layman, "you cannot convince me. All reason stands against the religious idea. Nowadays, people have to be shown. I have to be shown. And if your 'miracles' happened in the olden days, 'miracles' would happen now! I'd have to see 'em, old chap!"

Then he arose from his seat and took a box of matches from the mantel shelf. Extracting one, he drew the dead wood along the edge of the box, until a flame appeared, dancing on the end of the match. He lit his cigarette and tossed the match away. The room was almost in darkness. So he turned to the wall, touched a button, and the room was flooded with light. In moving away from the wall he accidentally set the electric fan in motion. He stopped it, absent-mindedly, and pushing it to safety, turned on another knob so that the room, which was slightly chill before, began to grow warm. Then he murmured an excuse, and taking up a little instrument, spoke a few words with his mother, who was almost a hundred miles away. When he had done, he came back to the hearth, and opening a box that stood there, turned a crank, and immediately the voice of the greatest singer in the world poured forth into the quiet room.

During the music the two sat very still, and when they had caused it to cease, the clergyman sighed and stirred and spoke again.

"I am still thinking of our conversation," said he, "and of how sorry I am that I cannot convince you. But, of course, you have me about the miracles. They used to happen and they don't any longer. I must admit I have no evidence—no tangible evidence, of even one!"

He arose.

"Must you be off?" asked the layman.

"I fear I must," said the clergyman, looking at his perfect timepiece. "My automobile is waiting for me. It will only take about ten minutes to cover the three miles up town, but I must not risk being late."

"I'll see you to the elevator," said the layman. "What have you up for tonight?"

"We are to see the Holy Land tonight," said the clergyman; "a motion-picture. Very comprehensive and perfect in detail, they tell me. It is to be shown at the parish house. As I never expect to be able to go to Jerusalem in person, I am most anxious not to miss any of it. And besides, I have to consult with the bishop about the offer of one of our members, who is an aviator, to give an exhibition flight for the benefit of the church."

"Well," said the layman, "sorry you have to leave so early, old chap, but of course I understand. Guess I'll just say a few important letters into the dictaphone, send a wireless to my wife, who sailed for Europe this morning, and then turn in. Good-night! and, by the by—if you ever run across any miracle, just call my attention to it!"

"Good-night!" replied the clergyman. "I wish you wouldn't laugh! But if I ever do see a miracle, be sure I'll let you know!"—From the Forum.

It has been tentatively decided to enlarge the Russian cabinet by ten members, five to be chosen from the Duma and five from the council of the empire. It is desired to make the cabinet more thoroughly representative of the people. At first the ministers were opposed to the plan, but they have recently modified their views.

A MEXICAN MEMORY

By A. B. I.

A MAN on a stretcher, carried by four peones, came down the dirty street. He had the swollen, distorted face that goes, sometimes, with typhus. An orchestra on the corner played, "Return Thou to Me, My Love"—but the man on the stretcher was beyond hearing.

Behind the afflicted one there followed a carriage, the occupants of which were drinking warm beer and singing love songs maudlinly. A man in the carriage said: "Pobrecito, he is better dead." A drunken woman answered: "Of a surety he is better with the angels. He was my man for the four years past. Before that I had an officer, a captain of the old federals, for my man. But he beat me so one night I killed him. But this man, this voluntario, was good and gave me money and beans, so for that I love him devotedly. Adios! such is the world: we get someone we like—and he goes from us like the shadows of the dawn. Pass me the beer, companero, while I mourn."

"Ah, these be troublous times," croaked the duena, an old crone of seventy. "One knoweth not what the morrow bringeth. * * Pass me thou the beer that I too may display my grief."

And the dying and the mourners ambled slowly by us. We saw the young woman in the carriage put her arms around the man, the old woman drank the beer from the bottle, and the dying one stirred uneasily on his stretcher.

"Well," remarked Brown, who was standing in front of the club with me, "I must get sober and run my assays. I'll see you at dinner at Sternau's."

A beggar hobbled by. She was filthy and her rags ill-concealed the pendulous breasts. "For the love of God, only one small charity to hold my soul in my poor body," she whined.

"I have no small money," said Brown. "Go thou with God and may thy days be happy."

She left, cursing, and the guard arrested her at the corner.

The sun dropped suddenly behind the mountain and dark followed immediately: there is no twilight in the subtropics. The moon jumped up over the smelter smoke to the east of town * * * and the police came out with their lanterns.

The provost guard, in high, cone-shaped hats, trotted by, the horses prancing, the moonlight glinting from the silver-mounted saddles. A carriage load of prostitutes were having an argument on the corner with the driver. It seems he had overcharged them for an alligator pear salad he had purchased at a peripatetic restaurant. The argument waxed heavy and to me through the velvet night floated much invective. The guard stopped in front of the argument and the comandante, a captain of seventeen years, asked what was wrong. The coachman with much gesticulation of his shoulders, explained.

"Bueno," said the captain, "this is easily settled. Pay the man."

"But, mi capitan," protested one of the women, "this son of ten thousand thieves is a robber."

"This is of small import to me. Pay the man." "But no, mi capitan, if we be shot for it."

"Ready—aim—fire," barked the captain.

Then the guard and the coachman rode away, leaving the women lying dead in the street.

And it was just an ordinary night.—From the St. Louis Mirror.

"There is nothing more important to a woman than saving her soul," shouted the evangelist. "Useless it is keeping her shape," murmured the fashion editor, who had been sent to report the proceedings.—St. Louis Globe Democrat.

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